



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: May 28, 2020

Agenda Item: Stumptown Addition to Garrity Mountain WMA (Region 2, Deer Lodge County)

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background: FWP proposes to purchase an approximately 600-acre parcel for inclusion in the Garrity Mountain Wildlife Management Area (GMWMA), west of Anaconda in Deer Lodge County. The proposed “Stumptown addition” is currently privately owned and at immediate risk for subdivision and development. FWP is partnering with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), and initial funding has been secured from RMEF, the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust, and FWP’s Habitat Montana Program. FWP is also partnering with the Montana Department of Justice’s Natural Resource Damage Program for additional funds necessary for the \$1,740,600 purchase price. The property is a natural extension of the existing WMA, providing critical winter range for elk and deer, summer range for bighorn sheep, and an important spring calving area for elk, as well as improving connectivity between existing high- and low-elevation habitats in GMWMA. The property includes 0.7 miles of Warm Springs Creek and its associated riparian area that is one of the most productive and diverse riparian habitats in the area. The addition would be managed as part of the GMWMA with continuing primary management purposes of wildlife habitat enhancement and compatible public recreation, including hunting, while increasing access to outdoor recreation opportunities in the Anaconda area.

Public Involvement Process & Results: A draft environmental assessment was made available for 30-day public comment (Nov-Dec 2019). The EA was posted on FWP’s website, and legal notices were published twice each in five local, regional and statewide newspapers. FWP sent printed EA copies and emails of the EA’s availability to adjacent landowners and interested individuals, groups, and agencies. FWP held a public hearing in Anaconda (Nov. 19, 2019) at which seven people and two groups (Anaconda Sportsmen’s Club [ASC], George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited [GGCTU]) provided comment. FWP also received 14 emailed comments from 11 people and three sportspersons groups (ASC, GGCTU, and Montana Wildlife Federation). Considering duplication (some commenters submitted both emailed and public-hearing input), FWP received input from a total 18 commenters (15 people and three groups). In summary, 14 commenters (including the three groups) supported the acquisition, three commenters (including one adjacent landowner) opposed the acquisition, and one person did not indicate specific support or opposition.

Alternatives and Analysis: No action is the only viable alternative, which would leave the property in private ownership. The current owner has already begun subdividing the property, and if this property is not purchased by FWP, much of the land is expected to be subdivided and developed as home sites. This would diminish fish and wildlife habitat values and potentially conflict with habitat and recreation values on GMWMA.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends that this purchase be completed. The project would incorporate existing valuable habitats into GMWMA while protecting the WMA from adjacent development.

Proposed Motion: I move that the commission approve FWP’s purchase of the Stumptown addition to Garrity Mountain Wildlife Management Area, as proposed.